2: Murra E-4 (no date) 1943 SD6 Cayapa SD6



back an exhaustive account of their subsistence pattern and material culture as well as considerable data on religion and ceremonial life. According to modern interests, the report is weak in life-cycle data and economics, and a serious drawback is the almost complete lack of comparative considerations. Moreover, it describes a culture with marked European influences. Nevertheless, at this writing, it remains one of our most complete accounts of an aboriginal South American group. The remaining titles in the bibliography refer to linguistic treatises, hearsay accounts, and phantasies of hurried travelers.

The inaccessibility of their habitat facilitated the *Cayapa's* survival into the 20th century, but it also prevented most chroniclers from visiting their land. Early references to naked and painted Indians living along the Patia River in large houses on tall poles and wearing gold ornaments might refer to the *Cayapa* or to some other *Chibchan* people. Jijón y Caamaño (1940–45, vol. 2) has reproduced fragments from an unpublished Cabello Balboa chronicle discussing the people of Esmeraldas Province during the 16th century. Among the peoples figuring prominently in Cabello Balboa's report are the *Nigua*, an Indian group inhabiting traditional *Cayapa* territory. Jijón y Caamaño's suggestion (1940–45, vol. 2) that the *Nigua* and *Cayapa* are one people seems tentatively acceptable.

Both peoples claimed to have descended from the Andean Highlands, though it is unclear if they were refugees from the *Inca* or Spanish invasions. As reported by Barrett, this tradition is very strong even now, four centuries after the Conquest, permeating various divergent activities of the *Cayapa*, who date many techniques and artifacts in terms of pre- or post-migration practices. In 1907 Beuchat and Rivet had pointed to toponymic and archeological similarities between Esmeraldas Province and the *Cara* country in the Highlands. Later work by Jijón y Caamaño (1912, 1919, 1940–45, vol. 2) has strengthened the case for *Chibchan* affiliation of the *Cara* language and given a measure of confirmation to native tradition.

## CULTURE

### SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

Agriculture is the main occupation of the *Cayapa*, although fishing and hunting supply a large percentage of their food. Each house is surrounded by clearings and fields, and additional clearings are customarily made away from the river, in the bush. Most families have fields of plantains, bananas, sugarcane, coca, and sweet manioc (yuca); in addition, cotton, tobacco, maize, yams, and pineapples are frequently cultivated. Many wild plants are encouraged through weeding and other care.

Plantains (pl. 60, *bottom, right*) form the staple food of the *Cayapa*, and each family will have several acres planted to this perennially ripening fruit. Bananas are fed to the hogs and cover an acreage almost as large as that of the plantain.

2: Murra E-4 (no date) 1943 SD6 Cayapa SD6



as that of the plantain. Almost every family owns its cane mill and distillery, which are supplied by the omnipresent canefields.

With all this emphasis on agriculture, the *Cayapa* are, nevertheless, a jungle people, skilled hunters of many species of rodents, deer, felines, peccaries, armadillos, and birds. Life at the riverside encourages and is encouraged by dependence on fish, crustaceans, shellfish, and crocodile eggs. Under aboriginal conditions the *Cayapa* were probably never hungry.

Hogs and chickens are now kept everywhere. Dogs are not conspicuously reported.

Food is mostly boiled, though frequently meat will be broiled or baked. Surpluses are dried and smoked.

### HOUSES AND VILLAGES

Though maps traditionally locate *Cayapa* "villages," these are nothing but agglomerations of three or four houses and a church. The houses stand empty most of the year and are used only at holidays when the priests visit the *Cayapa*.

The actual habitations of the people are spread through the jungle, always at riversides (pl. 57, *top*) and usually isolated from one another by fields or even uncleared stretches. The houses stand on high poles 6 to 12 feet off the ground and are reached by removable ladders. The roof is thatched with palm leaves (pl. 57, *center*), and the rectangular house is virtually unenclosed. Sometimes the house floor is separated into two parts, one for cooking, the other for sleeping and eating. One chief had a large house (pl. 57, *bottom*) which could seat 40 people and which had more than two "rooms." The furniture is scanty: hammocks are used for sitting and sleeping, and wooden seats are sometimes found. An attempt by Barrett to correlate these seats with the famous stone seats of Manabi (Handbook, vol. 2, p. 780) seems very inconclusive.

In addition to permanent houses, small temporary ranchos are sometimes built when people are far from home. The houses in the "village" are standard structures, but the church follows Spanish ways: it rests on the ground and has walls.

### CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT

Although *Cayapa* tradition records a period when the people wore blankets and even ponchos, today their clothes are scanty (pl. 59, *bottom*). The men wear a tight, small, white garment, made like bathing trunks, and a thin gaudy shirt of calico, with short and very tight sleeves. On festive occasions vests of European cut and manufacture are frequently donned over the shirt, and so are felt fedoras.

Women wear a long skirt of native cloth, girded with a narrow fringed belt. As in the Highlands, several skirts of different weights are sometimes worn. Head, shoulders, and chest are usually left bare.

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
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283 285 415 reach from the floor. The Cayapa women are very industrious, and whenever not occupied about the daily routine of their houses and fields, are spinning and weaving. The spinning tripod (pl. CVIII) is always kept in a convenient place at one side of the house, and one or two spindles are usually kept on the small woven shelf near the bottom of the tripod. All extra spindles, whether empty or filled, are, however, kept in these long tubular baskets. When several spindles are filled they are emptied by winding the thread into balls, in which form it is stored until needed.

231 285 One very special form of basket not mentioned in the tabulation above is the large bottle-shape basket shown in pl. XCIII, 7. This unusual basket was made as a cage for a chicken. As a rule, rough baskets of the usual cylindrical form are utilized for this purpose, the opening being closed by binding its edges tightly together with a pitigua cord. This bottle-shape basket was the only one of its kind encountered, and no Cayapa name was given for it.

### Basketry Handles

285 Most of the ordinary cylindrical baskets of small or medium size, regardless of technic, are provided with handles or bails such as those shown in pl. XCII, 3, and XCIII, 4. These handles are always of pitigua and are made in several forms.

The simplest handle consists of a plain piece of pitigua of the proper length, usually unsplit, tied at diametrically opposite points through the border of the basket. Usually it is passed through and brought up far enough

of the Cayapa and the Negroes of the area. The extreme humidity of the region, coupled with the saturated, heavy clay soil that predominates, precludes slash and burn cultivation. The Cayapa region is just on the very southern edge of the area marked by a peculiar diagnostic trait:

> . . . slash-mulch cultivation, of probable Indian origin, has evolved. Seeds are broadcast and chiamnes and cuttings are planted in an uncleared plot; then the bush is cut; decay of cut vegetable matter is rapid, forming a thick mulch through which the sprouts from the seeds and cuttings appear within a week or ten days (Best 1957: 139).

The main food crops are maize /pĩãu/, plantain /pánda/, sugar cane /kíta/, sweet manioc /kúlãu/, breadfruit (Artocarpus communis), a taro-like aroid tuber called /kíta/, squash /ki/, pineapple /kúlᵘ²a/, beans /kúlu/, and bananas /sanda/. The latter were universally considered to be starvation food, and prior to the recent world market demand for them, were fed to the pigs. There are many fruits such as papaya /papáᵘ²ya/, oranges /kánu/, lemons /kánu/, papaya /papáu/, guabo /kúlᵘ²a/, chirimoya (= cherimoya). Some sweet potatoes are grown, but they are scarce due to the depredations of

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Once a year, as a rule,

groups of Cayapa will band together for protection against the rattlesnake and brigands that infest the coastal regions, load their canoes with as much rubber as they have been able to collect, and set off in small flotillas. Sometimes they are joined by a few Negroes. Bringing rubber into Colombia in this manner is illegal and it is also illegal to bring back Colombian goods into Ecuador. The Cayapa are very conscious of the illicit nature of the activity and the trip to them is a big adventure. Rubber is their only economic product that is of value in Colombia. The price varies from year to year, but generally fluctuates around the equivalent of thirty dollars U. S. per one hundred pounds. Unfortunately, rubber trees are subject to poaching.

If the land is sufficiently swamp, it may be good for raising pigs. Swamplands lessens the possibility of theft.) Fruit trees are very often planted by women when they marry. The most popular fruits are *chirimoya*, a kind of custard apple, oranges and *aguacate*. Large sections are planted to the *naya* palm that, at one time, was an important commercially as the banana is today. The *naya* not is only a minor item in the

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